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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000270

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL  
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2007

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#### In Today's Papers

##### Gul Continues Talks in the US

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, in Washington on a state visit, said the operations launched against the PKK in France and Belgium were "no coincidence," adding they were initiated following information supplied by the US. Gul told the National Press Club in Washington yesterday that Turkey could cross the border into Iraq at any time, but what mattered was the outcome of such a move. Gul noted the US was not pressing to block a Turkish military operation against the PKK.

Several papers note the failure to arrange meetings with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Defense Secretary Robert Gates amounted to a "cold shower" for Turks, prompting Gul to cancel a trip of Turkish lawmakers to Washington to lobby against the Armenian genocide bill to be submitted to the US Congress.

Meanwhile, papers report that Ankara is seeking the extradition of the PKK members detained in France. Papers report thirteen suspects have been captured in raids in Paris, including Riza Altun and Nedim Seven, known to be the "treasurers" of the PKK. Several papers report a spokesperson for US Ankara Embassy said the raids in European countries were expected to continue.

##### Columnists Report on Conversation with Ambassador Wilson: PKK

##### Arrests in Europe, Armenia, US-Turkey Relations

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet and Zaman report US Ambassador to Turkey Ross Wilson said at a roundtable with prominent commentators in Istanbul that the US has begun to see the results of its objective of blocking the activities of the PKK in Europe in the arrests of the PKK members in Paris and Belgium. "The recent arrests have been a result of cooperation among the US, Turkey and

Europe," Wilson said, adding that in secret documents some European countries were characterizing the PKK as "the second most dangerous terror organization after al-Qaeda." Wilson emphasized that Ankara should work closely with the Iraqi government regarding the capture and extradition of the PKK members. Wilson said "Turkey and the US need each other now more than ever," stressing, "A worsening of ties will damage both sides." On the Armenian genocide resolution, Wilson said the Congress and the White House were in separate hands, but that such resolutions do not have any "binding effect" on the Administration. Wilson also underlined the importance of the continuation of US and Turkey, and the steps to normalize relations if he knew it would produce results but that it was not his decision to make.

#### Dink Murder Investigation Continues, Article 301

All papers report that Yasin Hayal, a key suspect in the murder of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, said police informant Erhan Tuncel had plotted the 2004 bombing of a McDonald's restaurant in Trabzon and the assassination of Dink. Meanwhile, Armenian Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan said that he has been receiving threat messages since the assassination of Dink. Mutafyan said the police found out that the messages directed against him come from the same source as those sent to Hrant Dink. Papers say Metin Tekce, the Kurdish mayor of the southeastern city of Hakkari, received similar messages from the same source.

Meanwhile, Turkish NGOs meeting on the issue of amending Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, under which Dink and others have been prosecuted for "insulting Turkishness," have suggested keeping the "Turkishness" reference, but referred to Turkish Constitution

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- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is expected to visit Turkey on February 15.

- A bill drafted by the ruling AKP envisages three-year prison penalties for those who fire their guns at weddings.

- Deputy Prime Minister Abdullatif Sener said that a draft introducing mortgage in Turkey would be discussed by the parliament soon.

#### International News

- A framework agreement was signed Wednesday in Tbilisi on the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway with the participation of Azerbaijani President Aliyev, Georgian President Saakashvili and Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan.

- Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis has promised to write off the debts of Turkish foundations in Western Thrace during a visit to the region.

- Israeli excavation work near a compound in Jerusalem that houses the al-Aqsa mosque has drawn strong Palestinian protests.

- Interior Minister Wolfgang Schauble said that Turks in Germany were gradually getting more radical.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON